

WESTERN NEWS

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40 Motocross course put on hold at mill site

Plans to build a motocross course on the former Stimson mill property have been put on hold pending an analysis of the area by the Environmental Protection Agency for possible asbestos contamination.

The Lincoln County Port Authority, which received the property as a donation from Stimson at the end of 2003, approved a temporary use permit in mid-April granting the Libby Creek ORV Park Association the right to use a portion of the 400-acre site for one year. The terms of the agreement allow the group to use

the property only for activities permitted by the port authority, and the port authority retains the right to terminate the group's use of the property at any time.

The group is planning to host a motocross event at the site this summer.

Construction of the course was stopped at the request of the EPA based on concerns that the project could lead to exposure to asbestos that may be present in the soil. The area where the course is planned is between Libby Creek and a canal that feeds a pond for fire suppression. Across the canal from the proposed motocross

course is a former nursery known to be contaminated with asbestos. The asbestos was a contaminant in vermiculite mined near Libby and added to the soil to promote drainage.

Other potential sources for asbestos contamination noted by the EPA are vermiculite insulation used in buildings on the mill property and trees that were logged near the former vermiculite mine and taken to the mill for processing.

According to information released by the EPA, thorough sampling of the area had not been a priority because of its iso-

lation. Sampling and analysis will be undertaken to determine whether contamination is present on the site where the motocross course is planned. If contamination is found, the area will be cleaned in 2005 along with the nursery site.

Sampling and analysis is hoped to be completed by Memorial Day to allow construction to move ahead if no contamination is found, said Kootenai River Development Corp. director Paul Rumelhart, who has been working with the port authority on the development of the former mill site.

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